Camellias

The Flower for People Who Don't Like Making a Fuss

V.N.

Camellia

In the world of flowers, some species seem determined to get your attention.

Roses show off their colors. Sunflowers practically insist on facing the sun. Bougainvillea is so flamboyant that even a modest little house can look as if it has dressed up for a parade.

But the camellia is different.

It simply stands there—calm and unhurried, with glossy green leaves and round blossoms whose petals unfold in neat layers. It is beautiful in a way that seems to require no explanation.

Perhaps that is why camellias give us such a distinctive feeling: *beauty without boasting*.

Whenever I look at a camellia, I imagine an elegant woman of another generation in Asia: dressed in a simple *áo dài*, her hair neatly gathered, walking slowly and speaking only as much as necessary. Not because she has nothing to say, but because she understands that the most important things do not always need to be said loudly.

That is the camellia.

In the West, we call it *Camellia*, a name associated with Georg Joseph Kamel, a Moravian missionary and naturalist. But scientific names are, after all, only labels. For centuries, people in Asia have looked at the camellia differently. It was never merely a plant to be classified in a botanical book. It was a flower to be

appreciated with the heart.

Camellias are, interestingly enough, relatives of the tea plant.

One gives us cups of tea for conversation; the other gives us blossoms for contemplation.

They belong to the same family, yet one enters through the mouth and the other through the eyes. And if we are fortunate, both can find their way into the heart.

Perhaps people long ago understood this.

You can drink tea without flowers. You can admire flowers without tea. But imagine a cold winter morning: a camellia blooming beside the window, a pot of hot tea on the table, a little chill outside, and a little quiet inside.

Suddenly, you don't feel like going anywhere.

And therein lies the danger of the camellia.

It makes you lazy.

Lazy about leaving the house. Lazy about chasing the rest of the world. Lazy about competing, proving yourself, or demonstrating how important you are.

You sit and watch a flower bloom slowly, and suddenly all those things you were so worked up about yesterday don't seem quite so urgent anymore.

The camellia does not have the explosive drama of many other flowers. It usually begins as a neat, modest

bud. Then, one day, the petals open—layer after layer—as though the flower had spent a long time thinking before deciding to reveal itself to the world.

Camellias come in many colors: red, pink, white, and sometimes combinations of several shades. Some have single petals; others are double. Some are so full and lush that they look almost like a pastry someone accidentally placed on a branch.

But the finest quality of the camellia is not its variety.

It is its *depth*.

If the rose is a young woman admiring herself in a mirror, the camellia is someone who has grown past that stage of life.

She knows she is beautiful.

She simply doesn't need the world to confirm it.

Perhaps that is why camellias seem so perfectly at home in old gardens.

A house with a porch. A wooden chair. A few potted plants. A wall weathered by time.

Add a camellia bush, and suddenly the whole scene acquires an old-fashioned charm.

Not the “old” of museums and antiques.

Rather, the old-fashioned world of things done slowly:

Drinking tea slowly.

Reading books slowly.

Writing letters slowly.

Falling in love slowly.

And, perhaps most difficult of all, getting angry slowly.

Today, of course, we live at a different speed.

You send a message and expect an answer before the minute is over. You take a photograph and immediately want to post it online. You begin a trip and are already thinking about taking pictures to prove that you are traveling. Sometimes we photograph our dinner before we have even tasted it.

In an age when everything must happen *right now*, the camellia continues to bloom in its own way.

No livestream.

No advertising.

No hashtags.

No need for anyone to “like” it.

It simply blooms.

And in doing so, it reminds us of something important: ‘*Some beautiful things exist not because they need to be*

seen by others, but simply because they are beautiful.'

That is not a bad philosophy for life.

When we are young, we often want recognition.

If we study well, we want to be praised.

If we succeed at work, we want people to know.

If we write something, we hope someone will read it.

If we grow a beautiful flower, we hope someone will ask what it is called.

But eventually, many of us discover something else:

If we spend our lives looking through the eyes of other people, we may never find peace within our own.

The camellia doesn't care.

It doesn't ask whether the person standing before it is a botanist.

It doesn't wonder how many followers its admirer has on Facebook.

It doesn't know whether the person looking at it today has been successful or unsuccessful in life.

It simply blooms.

And because it asks for nothing, it gives us something precious: *a moment of peace.*

The camellia also possesses a particularly beautiful kind of sadness.

When its blossoms fall, they often drop almost whole, rather than shedding their petals one by one like roses.

Watching a camellia blossom fall, you may feel as though someone has quietly closed a long chapter of life and walked away.

No complaints.

No pleading.

No drama.

When it is time to leave the branch, it leaves the branch.

Perhaps that, too, is a lesson.

We human beings are often afraid of losing things.

We fear the passing of youth. We fear separation from those we love. We fear the day when familiar faces are no longer beside us. We fear that beautiful days will eventually come to an end.

But every flower fades.

Every season changes.

The important thing is not to keep a flower blooming forever.

The important thing is to ask: '*While it was blooming, did we truly see it?*'

So, if one day you happen to come across a camellia in bloom, don't immediately ask, "What variety is it?"

Pause for a moment.

Look carefully.

Notice the petals, layered one upon another.

Notice the gentle colors.

Notice the glossy green leaves beside the blossoms.

And if you can, make yourself a pot of tea.

Then sit down.

You don't have to do anything.

Life sometimes needs moments like that.

One camellia.

One cup of tea.

One quiet morning.

And someone who has lived through enough noise to understand that peace itself can be a form of beauty.

That is why the camellia is more than just a flower.

It is like a small reminder from nature:

'Be beautiful.'

'Bloom when it is time to bloom.'

'You don't have to make a fuss about it.'

Because, in the end, the things that truly matter in life are not always the things that make everyone stop and stare.

Sometimes, they are simply the things that allow a tired

person to pause, smile, and think:

"Ah, what a beautiful day."

Camellia Welcomes the Spring

The camellia opens as spring draws near,
Like polished jade in golden light so clear.
Its crimson petals, layered soft and bright,
Send gentle fragrance drifting through the night.

It does not vie with peonies for wealth,
Nor envy plum or orchid's graceful health.
One blossom by the window, still and fair—
And suddenly, spring's perfume fills the air.